

Washington Commission on National and
Community Service

Collecting High Quality Outcome Data

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CORE THOUGHT

1

Learning Objectives

2

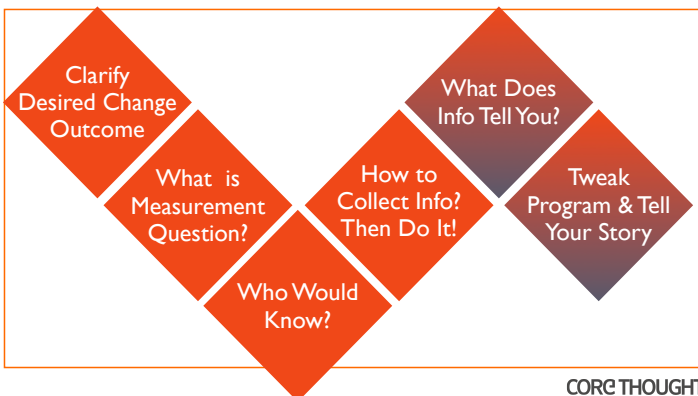
By the end of the workshop, you will:

- Understand current AmeriCorps/CNCS performance measurement expectations
- Know the four types of outcome options
- Clarify the theory of change for your program
- Craft your measurement question(s)
- Know how to optimally measure your outcome(s)
- Analyze existing outcome measurement data collection tools
- Know how to set instrument targets and aggregate data for your program

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Measuring Program Performance (Outcomes)

3



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Performance Measurement vs. Impact Evaluation

4

Performance Measurement

- Measures results of program activities
 - Did you do what you said you were going to do?
 - What difference did it make?
- Usually staff conduct (internal)
- Ongoing/Annual

Impact Evaluation

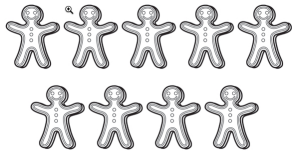
- Seeks to prove “causality” with control or comparison groups
- Requires more rigorous methodology
- Requires external assistance (prevent bias/special skills)
- Infrequently (grant cycle)

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What are Outputs? “Bean Counting”

5

- ▶ Measure the **AMOUNT** of service provided (Did you do what you said?)
 - ▶ Number of people served (usually best)
 - ▶ Number of products/events/etc. created



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What are Outcomes? The “So What?”

6

- Measure the **CHANGES** or **BENEFITS** that occur because of service provided (*individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment*)
 - Increase - Decrease
 - More - Less
 - Something is different



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Confusing Terminology

7

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Resources invested in program: dollars, volunteers, training, materials, etc.	Amount of work done, number of people served, etc.	Changes that occur relatively soon after a program intervention	Longer-term changes which are a result of the program



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Output & Outcome Alignment

8

- Do they:
 - Measure the same group
 - Clearly relate to each other

Output: Number of **students** participating in an afterschool reading tutoring program

Outcome: Number of **students** that **improved** their reading skills

*NOT: Number of **tutors** that will participate again because they enjoyed tutoring students*

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Brief Review: Identifying Outputs and Outcomes ACTIVITY

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What Are You Trying to Change? (K-ABC)

15



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What to Measure? Teen Health Program

11



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What Do These Questions Measure? Identifying Outputs and Outcome Types ACTIVITY

12

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Making the Case for Support

13

- Funders want to support activities with **high likelihood** of creating an intended change in a community need
- “Evidence-based” interventions: Will the proposed intervention (design, dosage) likely lead to the desired outcome?
- What’s the cause and effect?
- What to measure to demonstrate change?



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Performance Measures

14

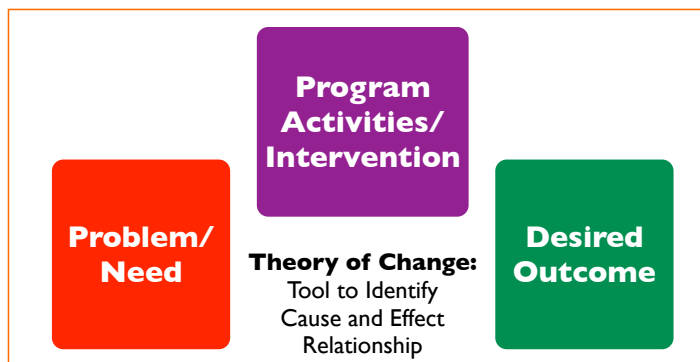
Activity: Low performing 3rd grade students will receive one on one reading tutoring from community volunteers afterschool three times a week for 20 minutes for the school year

	Desired Result	Indicator	Target	How Measured
Output (counting)	3rd grade students receive reading tutoring	Number of 3rd grade students receiving reading tutoring	50 3rd grade students will receive reading tutoring	Tutoring Roster or Log
Outcome (change)	3rd grade students read at grade level	Percent of 3rd grade students tutored reading at grade level	75% of tutored students read at grade level by end of year (38)	Standardized Reading Test

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How Clear Are You About What to Measure?

15



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Theory of Change Everyday Life Example

16



Problem:
I have strep
throat

Intervention:
I take antibiotics
(Amoxicillin)

**Desired
Outcome:**
I am well/healthy

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Theory of Change: Element 1: Need

17

**Problem/
Need:**
3rd Graders not
reading at Grade
Level



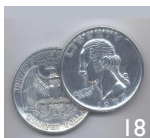
BE SPECIFIC:

What statistics show the extent/severity of the problem?
Why is this an issue? Causes?

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Theory of Change Element 2: Desired Outcome

18



**Problem/
Need:**
3rd Graders not
reading at Grade
Level



**Desired
Outcome:**
3rd Graders
reading at Grade
Level

BE SPECIFIC:

What change do you want to create?

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Theory of Change Element 3: Intervention

19

**Problem/
Need:**
3rd Graders not
reading at Grade
Level

Intervention:
Individualized tutoring
3 times/week for 20
min on five “building
block” literacy skills
through reading,
writing and verbal
communication

**Desired
Outcome:**
3rd Graders
reading at Grade
Level

BE SPECIFIC:

What is the best way to create your desired outcome?
What activities? What dosage?

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Keep It Simple....You Can't Measure EVERYTHING

20



3rd Grade Reading Tutoring:
What's the “Best” Outcome
to Measure?

Can read at grade level

Better Attendance

Less disruptive in class

Graduates from HS

Improved self esteem

Improved GPA

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Theory of Change Cause and Effect

21

**Problem/
Need:**
High level of
unemployment
among Iraq War
veterans

Intervention:
What is the best way
to create your
desired outcome?

**Desired
Outcome:**
Iraq War
veterans have
jobs

Possible Causes:

issue translating military service to
civilian jobs, lack of online job search
skills, no resume, poor interview skills,
lack of a GED, PTSD, etc.

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Program Activity ("the Intervention")

22

- What is the best way to achieve your intended outcome?
- Describe the design and dosage of your intervention or service activity:
 - **Design** (who does what with whom?)
 - **Dosage** (e.g., 3 times a week for 30 min for 3 months)
 - **Frequency** (how often does it happen?)
 - **Intensity** (amount of time)
 - **Duration** (over what period of time?)

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Critique Incomplete Theory of Change ACTIVITY

23

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What's Your Theory of Change? ACTIVITY

24

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Performance Measure Format

25

Activity: Low performing 3rd grade students will receive one on one reading tutoring from community volunteers afterschool three times a week for 20 minutes for the school year

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Indicators

26

- ▶ Specific information you collect to demonstrate results
- ▶ Concrete and measurable

Answers the questions:

- “What is my evidence that something occurred?”
- “What would it look like?”



Output indicator usually begins with “Number of...”
Outcome indicator usually begins with “Percent of...”

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Indicators - Examples

27

- ▶ **Desired Result:**
Seniors Experience an Improved Quality of Life
- ▶ Based on what your program does, how would you know a Senior's quality of life improved? What would you look for?
- ▶ **Desired Result:**
Middle School Students Have Improved Self Esteem
- ▶ What would you look for to know if a student's self esteem had improved?

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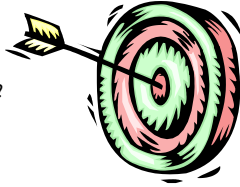
Targets

28

- ▶ Describes amount of change you anticipate achieving each year due to efforts of staff/volunteers.
- ▶ Based on indicator – specific, measurable amount of change that will signify “success”

Outcome Target:

Who will experience change?
How many people will experience change?
How much change will occur (compared to baseline)?
Over what time period will change occur (one year)



NEVER USE 100%!

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Targets - How to Set?

29

- ▶ Consider available program resources.
- ▶ Consider community context.
- ▶ Consider dosage of the intervention.
- ▶ First year targets may be educated guesses.
- ▶ Be prepared to adjust targets based on experience.
- ▶ Targets should be ambitious but also realistic.
Don't overpromise to look good and don't 'low ball'

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Now What?

30

You have identified the desired change (outcome) through your theory of change....

Are you clear about WHAT to measure?

AND

Are you measuring it the “BEST” way?

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Asking the Right Question is Critical

31

- ▶ **Intervention:** ABS driving school gives a 10 week course that meets twice a week for 60 minutes that includes classroom-based and on road lessons on driving skills
- ▶ **Desired Outcome:** Students have basic driving proficiency.

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Asking the Right Question

32

Question: Do you like driving?

Answer: I LOVE driving!!

“Do you like driving?” gets information about an **attitude** – not skill level.

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Asking the Right Question

33

Question: Are you a skilled driver?

Answer: I think I am a GREAT driver!

Asking, “Are you a skilled driver” gets information about **self perception**, a thought – not actual skill level.
Self-ratings are subjective NOT objective.

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Asking the Right Question

34

Question: Do you know the Washington driving laws?

Answer: I got 100% correct on my written driver's test!

Knowing state driving laws reflects **knowledge**
– not actual skill level even though it is objective.

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Asking the Right Question

35

Question: Have you demonstrated you are a skilled driver?

Answer: I passed my road test!

An on-road driving test DOES measure **skill** level or proficiency and is objective.

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Qualitative Data

36

- ▶ Describes or characterizes through words
- ▶ Focuses on meaning, experience or attitudes
- ▶ Collected through focus groups, interviews, opened ended questionnaire items, and other less structured situations.
- ▶ Not the same as anecdotal information

Qualitative → Quality

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Quantitative Data

37

- ▶ Focus on numbers and frequencies.
- ▶ Data which can be measured
- ▶ Length, height, area, volume, weight, speed, time, temperature, humidity, sound levels, cost, ages, etc.

**Quantitative →
Quantity**

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What's the Best Way to Ask?

38

Qualitative

Please describe how you have been feeling lately.

I feel great! I love my new job. I've lost 20 pounds and feel healthier than I have in years.

Quantitative

Thinking about the past week, how depressed would you say you have been on a scale from 0 to 5, where 0 means "not at all" and 5 means "the most possible?"

2

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What's Your Outcome Measurement Question? ACTIVITY

39

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Who's Your Best Source of Information?

40

Data Source = The person, group or organization that has information on whether the intended outcome occurred.

- Can you access this data source? How?
- What are the pros and cons of relying on this data source?
- What alternatives are available? What tradeoffs come with relying on an alternative data source?
- Once you've chosen an appropriate data source, make sure you're asking them the right questions!

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School Attachment Who Would Know?

41

Teachers



Students
(preferred data source)



Parents



Tutors



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Who is Your Data Source? ACTIVITY

42

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What Method Will You Use?

43

Data Collection Method: the process used to systematically collect data

Match method with:

- Measurement question for desired outcome
- Data source
- Resources (time, dollars, etc.)

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Surveys

44



Types of Questions:

Open ended

Closed ended

Scales
Ranking
Multiple Choice

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Interviews & Focus Groups

45



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Observations

46



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Other Commonly Used Methods

47

- ▶ Logs and Tally Sheets
- ▶ Standardized Tests
- ▶ Program Developed Pre/Post Tests
- ▶ Rubrics
- ▶ Secondary Data
- ▶ Other?

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**Aligning Method to
Measure a Desired
Outcome
ACTIVITY**

48

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Choosing or Designing an Instrument

49

► Which ever method you select, what instrument will you use?

- “Borrow” vs. Develop
- Does it ask the “right” questions to get at your desired outcome?
- Does it have all the necessary components?
- What information will each question yield?
- How will you use information, if not related to outcome?

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Instrument Mapping

50

► Look at each question on your data collection tool and ask:

- Does this help us measure the desired outcome?
 - Is there one question? More than one?
- What kind of data will we get?
 - Subjective? Objective?
 - Quantitative? Qualitative?
- If it doesn't measure the outcome, do we really need to ask it?
 - How will we use the answer? Nice to know or internal use?
- How will we analyze this?
- What is our target? How much change is “enough”

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Instrument Mapping ACTIVITY

51

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Data Collection Steps

52

After identifying a data source, method and tool(s):

1. Identify who you need to work with to collect data
2. Set a schedule for collecting data
3. Train your data collectors
4. Implement data collection

Good practice is to pilot test your tool.

FOR BEST RESULTS make key decisions about how to implement data collection BEFORE your program begins!

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Program PM Targets

53

- ▶ Target describes amount of change you anticipate achieving. Based on indicator – specific, measurable amount of change that will signify “success”
- ▶ Tools may vary by site but which questions get at the desired outcome?
- ▶ Need to apply program target to data collection tools used by each site
- ▶ Need to report aggregate outcome for program not each site

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Data Aggregation and Reporting ACTIVITY

54

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Summary of Key Points

55

- ★ Use your theory of change as a guide to outcome measurement.
- ★ The type of outcome you want to measure (attitude, knowledge, behavior, condition) influences your choice of data source, method, and instrument.
- ★ Be very clear about the measurement question to ask
- ★ Choose methods based on ability to measure your desired outcome and ease of use.
- ★ Map your instrument
- ★ Remember: Continuous Improvement NOT Perfection

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Ways to Connect

56

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